

An Appreciation

In memory of

William Thomas Ormiston, A. B., A. M.

Professor in Robert College

Constantinople, Turkey

From 1885 to 1918

William Thomas Ormiston, A. B., A. M.

Born June 7, 1856

Died April 5, 1918



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1885 - 1918

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An Appreciation

In the death of Professor Ormiston, Robert College is called upon to mourn the loss of one of its oldest American teachers. He was born on a farm in the town of Rossie, St. Lawrence County, N. Y., and there with nine brothers and sisters, passed the ordinary life of a farm boy in an exceptionally happy and interesting farm home. As a youth he went to the Gouverneur Wesleyan Seminary, then in the control of the Methodist Episcopal conference, and there received his first academic education.

Of Scotch parentage, a son of the union of two of the best known Scotch families of southern St. Lawrence County, the Ormistons and the Hills, he was a Presbyterian in religion and naturally turned to Hamilton College for his higher education. He was graduated in the class of '85 of Hamilton, within a few weeks after his graduation sailed for Constantinople, and began a service on the faculty of Robert College which continued up to the time of his death.

In thinking of what he did for the College, we first think of the breadth of his services. His natural tastes were scientific. In

his later years he organized the department of chemistry, and devoted to this department the larger share of his attention. At the same time he had classes in mineralogy and astronomy.

Occasionally he was asked to teach arithmetic, and on this subject he prepared a valuable text-book which ran through several editions, and which was adapted to the wants of the Ottoman Empire.

Earlier in his career he did good work in English, for which his fine tastes well fitted him. He was a master in the use of the language, whether in prose or verse, a constant student of its literature, and he lived to show others the beauties of our tongue.

In these earlier days, on account of our limited means, we needed men of versatile gifts. Professor Ormiston saw this, and with his natural versatility he gave his whole heart to what was most pressing at the moment; and thus we find him teaching many other subjects than those already mentioned. It was the success of the College that stirred him most, and not his own reputation. With his talents he could have made a name for himself as a specialist in science, but all his sympathies were with the ideals of the College; and with his deep loyalty to those ideals as declared by its

founder, he modestly put away all selfish ambition and identified himself wholly and only with the aims of the College. He never sought preferment here, nor place in any other institution which some might have said was more attractive. To live and die for Robert College was his one ambition, and happily that ambition was attained.

Consistent with the purpose of the College and the natural bent of his own mind, he devoted all his energies to making the character of his students his first object, and not their mere brains or attainments. His fine personality helped him in this. His towering figure, his amicable expression, his approachable disposition, made him move among us like the democratic nobleman he truly was. Everybody loved and respected him.

He was never a partisan. No race or creed could say that he was partial to their interests, or sacrificed them in preferring another.

In his own religion he was conservative. As a Scotch Presbyterian, he was strict in his devotion to the church of his fathers, but his big heart went out to all the various faiths that were centered in our College halls.

A typical American he was, and most loyal to the principles of our great Republic. He wisely enunciated those principles in acts and life, rather than in words. So he always labored to make our students religious in the way that names no denomination, and to make them Americans only as humanity, and universal justice, and brotherly love, are American.

One can see from this what a hold he had upon "our boys." They felt that he was theirs, that he was always trying to inspire them with the noblest sentiments, and to fit them to go forth at the end of their course and improve their own national religions and the several countries to which they belonged.

Nor can we omit, in recalling the breadth of his work, the charm that he exercised as a public speaker. His striking personality, his rich deep voice, so well modulated, his dramatic gifts—were a great help in enforcing his ideas. And the ideas themselves were gathered from a large storehouse of reading, experience and observation. They were put in simple yet choice English, and often with a humor that no one could imitate or dared to challenge in repartee. He frequently gave public lectures on subjects chosen from a wide range of thought.

Above all as a deeply religious man, he frequently led our devotions on Sunday evenings. There was always the atmosphere of the preacher about him, and he might well have been mistaken for one in this rank. But although he sometimes gave us sermons, original and selected, his manner was that of a friend in conversation. How we shall miss these Sunday evening talks, principally to the students, but to which all were invited! Being so ready in speech he was often chosen upon short notice, but when thoroughly prepared he spoke on most practical questions, developed them with force, and brought to bear his delightful fund of humor and of anecdote.

And we shall miss him beyond measure at our weekly prayer meetings. He was regularly there and regularly took a prominent part; for he was a man who loved to pray and to speak on the subject in hand. His "chief end" as he was early taught, was "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." He walked with God and enjoyed that walk, and his whole religious influence was that of a man who enjoyed his religion and led others to enjoy it.

In his class room he was comrade as well as teacher. His discipline was friendly, and

not military. German student indeed he was, but the exact contrast of the German teacher, for every boy in his class could count on him for his friendship and his friendly help, whether in the class room, or on the campus, or in his own home.

Another aid to his influence in forming the character of the students was his thorough sportsmanship. He loved games, either indoors or out of doors on the athletic field, and there you could see him as a younger man playing ball, or tennis, or golf; and as an older man, as umpire, or helping to establish their sports. Always, we may be sure, seeing that every man had fair play and learned to win by fair play only.

It was his delight to make his home the home of the whole College. He was ably seconded in this by Mrs. Ormiston, who for long years had devoted herself to the same cause. Here all were welcome and all knew it and used the opportunity. It was an education and an example to enter their home. All were entertained with love, amused by games or stories, and prepared for duties to be done or difficulties to be conquered, by helpful conversation, often full of that quaint and kindly humor in which both husband and wife were so pro-

verbially skilled. They kept "open house," and one could find at their table teachers and students and citizens of the community outside our circle, sharing this bountiful hospitality and feeling at ease because they knew the friendship that had welcomed them here was hearty.

And what a helper his associates have lost in losing him! While most loyal to the earlier and fundamental ideals of the founders, he was always abreast of any progressive movements consistent with those ideals. The administration never had a more faithful supporter. The faculty found him constructive if critical. His heart abounded in sympathy with all good men and measures that would develop the influence of the College on the students or the country at large.

In the death of Professor Ormiston, our deepest sympathy goes out to the directors of the College, especially at such a time as this when the man with his personality, his talents, his experience and sturdy virtues, is so hard to find. It may be possible to find those with one or another of his qualifications, perhaps too in a larger degree, but to find in one man the blend of teacher, preacher, sportsman, leader, to find his good humor, his universal kindliness,

his untiring devotion to his own work and willingness to help others in theirs, his unswerving loyalty to the College and its administration, his readiness to sacrifice his own pleasure when the pleasure of others was at stake, to find that rare ability to take almost any place in the College left vacant by others' fault or failure, to find men who are deeply religious and thoroughly scientific, who make their lives a joy to all around them, and by these varied and strong qualities attract others to the highest standards of life,—such men are rare.

Who can ever take his place?

REV. CHARLES ANDERSON, D.D.

Mrs. William Thomas Ormiston
(Nee Susan Farley)

Connected with Robert College
since 1879

Died March 26, 1918



Mrs. Ormiston was connected with Robert College for nearly forty years. She was a niece of Dr. Hamlin and belongs to the first group of men and women who lived in the College and labored for it. She belongs with the men whose portraits hang upon these walls, and with Mrs. Washburn, and the first Mrs. van Millingen.

As Miss Farley, she came to the College in the fall of 1879, and was matron in Hamlin Hall for 14 years. She was young, beautiful, most energetic and devoted to her work. She was a fine vocalist, and those who heard her sing were impressed with the sweetness and sympathetic quality of her voice, and to this day remember her singing. She played the organ in Chapel and held a Bible Class for students. She was thoroughly unselfish, and the influence of her life was a power for righteousness in the College.

For twenty-five years she was the wife of Professor Ormiston and proved what influence a true woman may have in such a position. Her home was always open to the teachers, and her joyous, happy spirit made it a place to which they loved to go. She had an unfailing flow of wit and humor, but it never had any sting to wound others.

In her long sickness she was patient and uncomplaining. Day by day she steadily ripened for Heaven. The bonds that held her to this world constantly grew weaker, and the ties that drew her toward the other world daily grew stronger. One day she said: "I should like to step into Heaven for a few minutes." Another day she said: "I want to go up," pointing upwards.

Her last words with her husband were their evening prayer together before she went to sleep.

As the morning began to dawn she awakened from that sleep only to fall into the last sleep and to awaken on the other side of the veil in the company of those who had gone on before her.

There is no sorrow in such a death as this; rather we rejoice that her sufferings are ended, that her weakness is exchanged for strength, and that this mortal has put on immortality.

Mrs. Ormiston died Tuesday, March 26, 1918, at three o'clock in the morning.

